



BULB LOG 41..... 10th October 2012



Colchicum agrippinum



These Colchicum choose the very time that many plants are retreating underground for the winter to display their flowers making them, in my view, invaluable in the garden. The selection above shows how well they brighten the autumn garden as they are highlighted in turn as they catch the low light from the sunshine.



Colchicum speciosum album

The flowers of Colchicum speciosum album push up through the mass of falling foliage. There is something about the chaos of the autumn garden that I enjoy. Many people rush to tidy up their gardens, cutting back plants as soon as they show the first signs of going dormant but I prefer to let nature take its course. The falling stems and foliage will release nutrients, provide shelter to insects and invertebrates which in turn provide a food source for the birds that are constantly foraging in our compact wilderness.



I still have a few boxes of *Colchicums* growing in boxes making it easy for me to split them each year with minimal damage.



Even though it has been a cool wet summer many *Corydalis* like *C. pseudobarbisepele* still lost their leaves after flowering – I often thought it was because they got too warm and dry. Now we are presented with a lovely new set of leaves beautifully set off by the autumnal dew.



Corydalis capitata also dies back completely after flowering and setting seed then it also produces a new growth of foliage seen above with the old, now brown, flowering stems. I will get round to removing those eventually.



Flowering out of season this is a hybrid I got from Peter Korn - I think he told me he had named it '**Corydalis Korn's Purple**'. I showed a similar one that arose in our garden in a previous [bulb log](#).



Crocus pulchellus

Some years ago I scattered some seeds of *Crocus pulchellus* in our front drive now it seeds itself around.



Crocus pulchellus

Despite the fact that it is totally hardy and well established in the garden I still grow a number in pots so I can enjoy their flowers under the shelter of the glasshouse.



October storm

The start of October is when I apply the second storm to the bulb houses and the first good soaking to the Fritillaria in the frit house. The same rules apply which is to flood each pot and watch it drain taking especial care to ensure the potting mix of the fritillarias being watered for the first time of the season is completely soaked through.



Any pots which seem a bit slow to drain are given an extra soaking. Each flooding will improve the structure of the potting mix as the water creates an internal drainage system as the water passes down - I normally find that after a second flood most pots drain quickly. I am looking for a mix that takes no more than 30 seconds to drain and even better still are the ones where the drainage is so good that it is difficult to flood the pot at all.



The growing bulbs tend to mound up the compost above them which is most obvious in pots that are crammed full of bulbs. When I irrigate the flow of water settles the gravel top dressing and compost back down often revealing the promising shoots for the first time.



I have at least one flower to look forward to in this pot of *Sternbergia sicula*.



Sternbergia greuteriana is always the first of this beautiful genus to flower for me.



Many of the troughs look at their best at this time of year having put on a good amount of growth during the summer. It will be interesting to compare them again as we move through the winter.





The moss is establishing well on the broken concrete blocks I used to landscape these bijou environments - I intend to scatter seed onto that moss in due course.



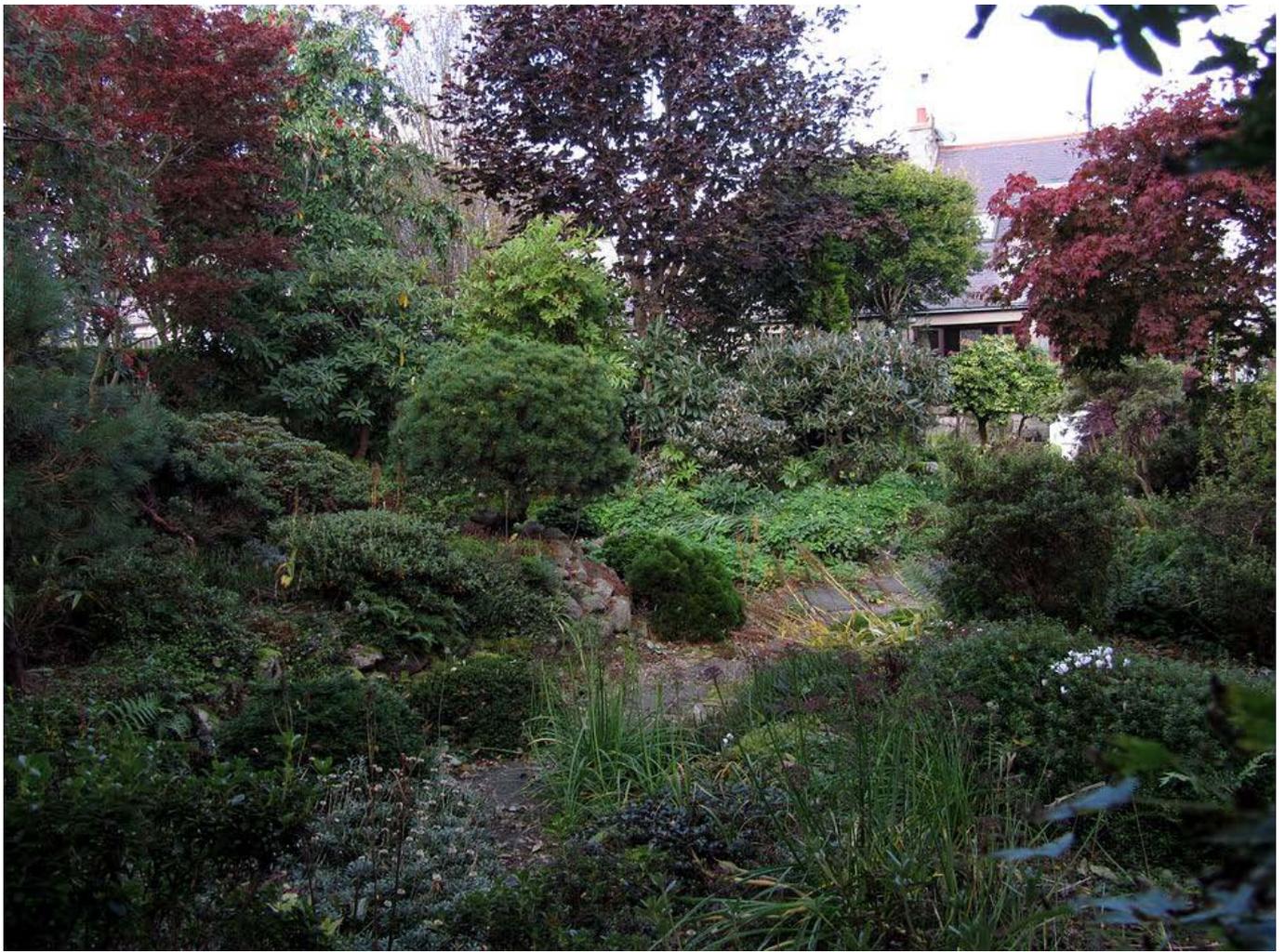
Here you can see some *Androsace* seedlings establishing from seed I scattered last winter.



Autumn is certainly making its presence felt in the garden now as herbaceous plants retreat; trees lose their leaves and the autumn flowering Cyclamen provide the flowers.



Ferns also come to the fore at this time of year and I especially appreciate those that keep their fronds all winter.



The final two pictures for this week also show the importance of having good structural plants, such as trees and shrubs, which give form and space to the garden all the year round.

